

ANGLER GUIDE

FISHING PROSPECTS FOR STREAMS IN THE FABIUS RIVER WATERSHED

Fishing quality is highly variable depending upon location within the watershed. Almost 60% of the North Fabius River has been channelized (straightened), so the deep pools that once harbored large flathead catfish and other sportfish have been replaced by long, shallow, sandy runs. As a result, the North Fabius River provides some fishing for carp and small to mid-size channel catfish, but otherwise lacks angling appeal.

The South Fabius and Middle Fabius rivers, however, have some of the best fish habitat and offer some of the finest fishing opportunity in northeastern Missouri. The reason? The South Fabius River is only 10% channelized, and the Middle Fabius is almost entirely unaltered from its naturally meandering condition. Also, both streams generally have excellent forest buffers.

The Middle Fabius River has a desirable mix of pools, riffles, snags (dead trees), and drift piles that are home to good numbers of nice-sized channel catfish. In fact, the Middle Fabius River may be the best channel catfish stream in northeastern Missouri. In addition, anglers should not be surprised to encounter big flathead catfish, large carp, and catchable-size smallmouth bass in suitable habitats. Wade fishing the woody structure is popular on the Middle Fabius. Public access exists at Tolona Access in Lewis County and on the Deer Ridge Conservation Area.

The South Fabius River provides excellent fishing opportunity, often in association with outstanding scenery wherever the river wanders against the ancient limestone bluffs that border its flood plain. Sportfish diversity eclipses that of most Ozark streams. In a single float trip, anglers using a variety of methods and focusing their efforts on good pools and woody habitats can expect to encounter quality-size flathead catfish, channel catfish, white crappie, freshwater drum, smallmouth bass, and walleye. Public access exists at White Oak Bend Access in Knox County, and Dunn Ford, Black Hawk, and Sunrise accesses in Marion County. Soulard Access in Marion County, located below the confluence of all the Fabius River tributaries, offers boating access and five rock dikes that provide bank fishing in and around the holes created by the scouring action of water flowing over the dikes.

Significant reaches of the South Fabius and Middle Fabius rivers can be floated by canoe or jon boat much of the year. Under low flow conditions, there is a more frequent need to drag watercraft over riffles and debris than in the popular Ozark float streams. But unlike the Ozarks, anglers will experience isolation, litter-free beauty, and near-wilderness conditions within the forested river corridor, in addition to good fishing for a wide variety of species. Detailed float trip information and maps highlighting public stream access areas can be obtained by calling the Northeast Regional Service Center of the Missouri Department of Conservation at 660-785-2420.